

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES

City of Vancouver Archives Newsletter

Number 3: October 2006

The City of Vancouver Archives Newsletter reports on the Archives' achievements, challenges, activities, and events, and presents profiles of staff, researchers, donors, and members of the Friends of the Vancouver City Archives. We hope you enjoy the Newsletter's third issue.

Our focus in this issue is on the work of our team of students that was carried out over the past five months. Without them, many projects would have taken much longer to complete or would never have started. We are extremely grateful for their hard work and enthusiasm, as they certainly made the Archives a vibrant and exciting place to be this summer.

In order to learn more about the holdings in the Archives, we invite you to drop by for a visit or check out our website. Suggestions, comments or questions you may have about our Newsletter or website are always welcome. Feel free to contact me at 604-736-8561.

Heather Gordon, Acting City Archivist

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Thanks to all the Archives staff who contributed to this issue—Sue Bigelow, Nancy Mulligan, Megan Schlase, and Chak Yung—and to the students who submitted reports.

Friends of the Vancouver City Archives

Join the Friends and get involved in helping the City of Vancouver Archives preserve Vancouver's documentary heritage. For information about the Friends, see back cover.

Featured Fonds

Fonds is an archival word that means the whole of the documents, regardless of form or medium, created and accumulated by a person, family, organization, or other corporate body in the course of that creator's activities or functions. Archives work by acquiring fonds, preserving them, and organizing them for use and access. Each issue of the newsletter focuses on a fonds recently made available.

James Inglis Reid, Ltd. Fonds

by Christoph Voss

This fonds was gathered in five parts starting in 1991, with the final portion donated in 2006. It contains business ledgers which include extensive figures on sausage kitchen production, daily orders, sales, staff hours, and financial statements. It also contains several samples of invoices, receipts, and correspondence, and a few photographs.

James Inglis Reid, Ltd. was a Vancouver institution and a business that was emblematic of the city's history. James Inglis Reid was an immigrant Scotsman, who was on his way to Australia via the Canadian Pacific Railway and Steamship Line when a brilliant sunset over Burrard Inlet convinced him that he had already reached his destination.

Continued on next page

James Inglis Reid, Ltd. Fonds, contd.

Reid found employment with Edgett's Grocery, a prosperous merchant located at 440 Cambie Street (now an official heritage building off Victory Square). Reid soon established his own shop on Main Street where he sold cured hams and bacon. Reid followed Vancouver's civic development, first moving his business to Harris Street (now Georgia Street) and then to Granville Street, the centre of Vancouver's business community. It was at 559 Granville Street that James Inglis Reid established the shop that would grow into a Vancouver institution.

An acute businessman, Reid saw an opportunity to expand his business beyond basic provisions and hams when he hired an experienced butcher by the name of Horatio Nelson Menzies. The combination of Reid's business acumen and Menzies' skill produced a business that is still widely remembered nearly a century after its establishment as a humble grocery on Main Street. With Menzies help, Reid introduced a selection of fresh meats and an array of fresh sausages that became the standard for quality in Vancouver.



Detail from [Photograph of sales floor at James Inglis Reid, Ltd., 559 Granville Street Vancouver, British Columbia], Leonard Frank, photographer. [1925]

In addition to Ayrshire and Wiltshire bacons, white and black puddings, salt-cured and smoked hams, the Scotsmen produced haggis. Haggis, a traditional Scottish delicacy, is composed of ground organ meat that is bound with oatmeal and encased in sheep's stomach. Menzies prepared a batch in honour of poet Robert Burns' birthday and, according to legend, word traveled fast. The business sold out of haggis within hours. The reaction was so positive and the demand so great that Reid and Menzies added it to their regular selection.

The combination of fresh meats, sausages, cured hams, and haggis attracted a steady clientele and brought James Inglis Reid financial success. He purchased the property and building situated at 559 Granville Street in 1926. Reid then embarked on a two-year renovation of the building. The building consisted of three floors above ground and the basement. The ground floor of the building remained the retail area. It was expanded and smartly outfitted with marble flooring and counters.

In addition to the business of selling fresh meat, smoked hams, and cured bacon, James Inglis Reid, both the man and the business, were focal points for Vancouverites interested in Scottish culture. Reid was a founding member of the Vancouver Scottish Society. Robert Burns' birthday was the highest sales event of the year. The business supplied hundreds of pounds of haggis for Burns' Night suppers throughout the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, and cities throughout the province.

James Inglis Reid retired from the business in 1949. Gordon Wyness, his son-in-law, became the proprietor. Under the direction of Wyness, James Inglis Reid, Ltd. survived and prospered for another forty years. 559 Granville Street, with its distinctive neon sign, was a destination for Vancouverites for generations; however, as the commercial patterns of Vancouver changed, the location became a liability. By the mid 1980s, James Inglis Reid was a specialty butcher shop located amidst banks and chain stores. The expansion of the Pacific Centre mall ultimately provided the impetus to cease commercial operations and sell the property. James Inglis Reid Ltd, a venerable Vancouver institution, closed in 1989.

Recent Acquisitions

Neil Gilchrist fonds

In September 2006, we acquired 65 diaries written by Neil Campbell Gilchrist from 1910 to 1965, excluding 1914. He started writing a diary when he was 16, and thereafter wrote an entry every day of his life. Neil Campbell Gilchrist was born in Ontario in 1894, and lived briefly in California before his family settled in Vancouver when he was six. His father, Lauchlin Gilchrist, worked in real estate and was City Clerk of Vancouver from 1911-1933.

After arrival in Vancouver, Gilchrist led an active life, building a tree house in Stanley Park and being taught to swim by Joe Fortes. He became a teacher and then in 1918 joined the army but was never sent overseas.

After the war, he became an optometrist, married Elsie Clark and had three daughters, Margaret, Barbara and Jane. His first office was in David Spencer's department store, and he worked five days a week until he died in 1975. His daughter Jane donated his diaries.

Professional Experience and Internships

This summer, we had students from different programs across the country working at the Archives. They came to us from the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies; the Museum Management and Curatorship program at Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario; and the Library Technician program at Langara College, all of which offer opportunities for students to gain real-world experience in cultural institutions. We had more students than usual at the Archives, making it a lively place this summer.

Below are accounts from some of the students of their time at the Archives.

Spencer Films Project

by Becky Morin

In 2005, the Archives acquired a set of 87 family films shot by various members of the Spencer family, of Spencer's Department Store. The films range from 1925 to 1964, and are shot in both black and white and in colour. In addition, the collection includes two films utilizing an early colour process known as

lenticular Kodacolor. The Spencer Family Films document the life of this prominent family, including footage shot by family at homes in Vancouver and West Vancouver, at their ranches in the Interior, and on holidays abroad.

For four months, I worked on a professional experience project to appraise, arrange, and describe the films, as well as to make minor repairs and prepare the films for reproduction and eventual long-term storage. In the near future, Archives patrons will be able to access full descriptions of each of the films, and to view digital copies of these unique films without risk to the fragile originals.



Photo: Chak Yung

I brought to the Archives my experience working in library preservation at the California Academy of Sciences and the J. Porter Shaw Maritime Library, both in San Francisco, and at the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia in Vancouver. I also studied bookbinding at the San Francisco Center. None of this work prepared me for the unique challenges of working with old, curly, brittle films! I am pursuing a Master of Library and Information Studies and a Master of Archival Studies at UBC with the hope of finding a position working with rare books and manuscripts. I gained a great body of knowledge about the rewards and challenges of working with motion pictures, and I am extremely grateful to the Archives for the opportunity to work on this project.

Retention and Disposition Plans

by Christine Gergich

I have completed a UBC graduate co-operative program term at the City of Vancouver Archives. I am a Master of Archival Studies candidate going into my second year at UBC. From May to August, I worked with the City Archives, the Records and Information (RIM) unit and other City departments to research and write procedures for the development of Retention and Disposition Plans (RDPs). The



Photo: Chak Yung

project included the creation of communication strategies, an interview plan and a draft manual. I then had the opportunity to test my procedures by interviewing a few City employees and drafting some RDPs.

What is an RDP? The RDP describes in detail what is expected to happen to records when they are transferred to the City Archives. The RDP is an integral part of the City's record schedules for those public records series that have been classified as 'Archival'. The RDP documents a department's continuing business needs and any future access requirements. The RDP aids in the establishment of appraisal guidelines and procedures at the City Archives. Why create an RDP? The RDP supports the safeguarding of records that are deemed important for the corporate memory of the City of Vancouver. The RDP provides proper documentation of appraisal practice at the City Archives. Finally, the RDP provides a preservation plan for records of on-going value, particularly those remaining in the custody of a department.

It was a great experience working within an integrated records and archives division of a municipal government. RIM and City Archives staff taught me invaluable records management and archival skills and lessons.

Summer in the Stacks by Christoph Voss

My first project was the arrangement and description of the James Inglis Reid, Ltd. fonds. (See Featured Fonds, page 1).

The second project of my internship was to rework the arrangement and description of the Children's Hospital Society fonds. The bulk of the fonds consist of minute books from meetings of the Board of Directors. As the volumes span five decades, they are a rich vein of Vancouver history.

My final project was to compose descriptions for the Collected Photographs series in the H.A. Price fonds. The majority of the photos are construction progress photographs of the third CPR station, Pier "D", Pier "B/C", Pier "A", and the Sleeping, Dining, and Parlour Car



Photo: Chak Yung

Department Storage warehouse. This was a very challenging project for a couple of reasons: its size, with over 600 items; and the repetitive nature of "progress photos", in which the photos have the same view and subject and vary only slightly. Therefore, a stock description can be employed, but one has to be aware of and include the elements which distinguished the individual photographs.

Another interesting component of the progress photos is what they inadvertently capture. An example of such a capture was the September 1912 visit to Vancouver by the Duke of Connaught, the then Governor General. In one, and only one photo, one of the derricks used for excavation is draped with bunting and the second station is adorned with flags. A cross-reference of the date indicated that was indeed the very day that the Duke was in town to open and dedicate the Connaught Bridge (better known as the Cambie Street bridge).

Gifts to the City by Katrina Borowski

This summer I worked on a unique project with 3-D objects at the Archives. The Archives has recently been given the official responsibility of permanently retaining the valuable gifts that have been given to the City of Vancouver. With my background in museum studies, and because the Archives does not have the resources to spend much time managing gifts, I came up with an innovative system for managing objects. With the help of Sven Buemann, the City's new Chief of External Relations and Protocol, I created a set of policies and procedures for incoming gifts, with which the City of Vancouver and the Archives will be better able to manage, organize and store 3-D objects in the future.



Photo: Chak Yung

I came to the Archives from Peterborough, Ontario to complete my post-degree program in Museum Management & Curatorship. My summer internship was the last semester for my program. Originally from Edmonton, I have a BA from UBC and a background in international education. I plan to work in heritage settings in collections management.

McLennan McFeely Hardware Catalogue
by Kim Csoko

Originally from Burlington, Ontario, I moved to Vancouver in 1998 to pursue my studies at Langara College and the University of British Columbia. I received a BA in Interdisciplinary studies from UBC in 2004, with concentrations in Literature and Museum Studies. In January of 2005 I began my studies at the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies, and will formally receive an MLIS in November 2006. My coursework, however, will end this June, and shortly thereafter I will be working as a reference librarian at the Vancouver Public Library. My interests include information retrieval, database design, and public service.



Photo: Chak Yung

I was at the Archives for a six-week period working with a 1908 McLennan McFeely Hardware Catalogue. Because this item is not a typical archival object, the Archives wanted a library student to work on the project. I was building the structure of a searchable database for the catalogue that will eventually go online, and developing a model for the web site in which the database will be housed. This involves defining fields for metadata, developing thesauri for some of the fields, designing the look of the database, and building web pages. I enjoyed this work and found it challenging. It is very much related to what I would like to end up doing as a professional librarian, building and maintaining in-house databases of special materials to increase public access to rare and/or fragile library holdings.

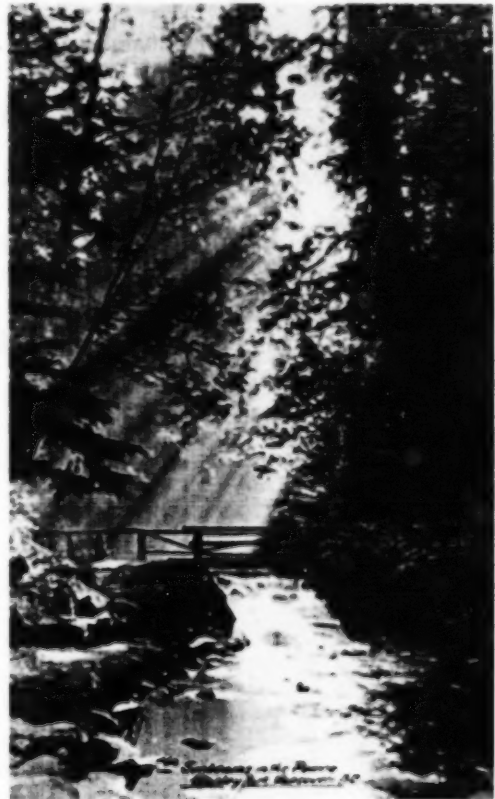
Describing the Postcard Collection
by Jill Prior

From June to September 2006, I described a portion of the Postcard Collection. My position was partially funded by the Young Canada Works in Heritage Organizations program, an initiative of the Department of Canadian Heritage and part of the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy. As a student in the Master of Archival Studies program at UBC, this experience was invaluable to me.

My work consisted chiefly of creating descriptions of postcards. This information will help researchers locate postcards within the collection once the descriptions are uploaded to the Archives' public database. I also developed guidelines for describing postcards within the Archives' collection.



Photo: Chak Yung



*Sunbeams in the Ravine, Stanley Park,
Vancouver, B.C., Camera Products Company of
Vancouver, [193-].
Add. MSS 1052 P-602*

I faced some challenges in identifying basic information such as printing processes and dates of publication. Fortunately I was able to turn to the Archives' community of staff and supporters for help. Thanks to Archives' staff, summer students and Friends of the Archives Margaret Waddington and Fred Thirkell for assisting me with the identification of places,

structures, and dates, and clarifying copyright rules.

The postcard collection consists of approximately 1900 postcards dated from the early 1900s to the present. 1455 have been described so far and will be available for research. Over half of them are printed with images of streets, buildings, parks, and other sites in Vancouver; many of these postcards were the work of Vancouver-based photographers and publishers. Other postcards within the collection depict locations and scenes in the Lower Mainland and elsewhere in British Columbia. Sites in other Canadian provinces, the United States, and England are also represented.

Our Volunteers

Buddy Poelzer

One of our newest volunteers, Buddy started working at the Archives this September. He grew up in Vancouver and has always found its history interesting. Buddy has two children and two grandchildren, and bicycles to the Archives on his volunteer days.

He has practiced photography for both business and pleasure, and enjoys model building and painting. A skilled Kwakwaka'wakw carver of masks and totem poles, Buddy has put his dexterity and gentle handling skills to good use in the preservation lab, organizing and flattening large aerial photographs of Vancouver.



Photo: Chak Yung

Users of the Archives

Lisa Smedman, Editor/Columnist, *Vancouver Courier* newspaper

Lisa's is a very familiar face here at the Archives, where she has been conducting research for her weekly 'History's Lens' column for the *Vancouver Courier* since April 2001. Lisa's research draws on the full range of materials we have in the Archives' holdings, from photographs to city directories, to private manuscripts and City Department files, to maps, plans, and art works.

Her columns, which cover a broad range of local history themes—some forgotten or even obscure—are extremely popular with *Courier* readers, as evidenced by frequent and appreciative letters to the editor. Her work on the series has also won her the top award for 'Best Historical Story' in the Canadian Community Newspapers Association's *Better Newspapers Competition*, of 2006. Lisa won the prize for her article on the Vancouver Battalion in World War I, published November 6, 2005, which was based on the diaries of John Frost, held here at the Archives. The piece prompted an email all the way from England from a relative of one of the figures mentioned in the story.

A graduate of Langara College's journalism program, Lisa also has a BA in Anthropology, and has been working as a journalist since 1984.



Photo: Chak Yung

Our First City Archivist: Major James Skit Matthews

by Megan Schlase

There is never a day that passes at the Archives when we don't mention Major Matthews' name or appreciate his legacy. The fruits of his efforts to document and collect the historical records of Vancouver's development form the cornerstone of our holdings, and the importance of his role as advocate for their continued care and preservation cannot be overstated.

Born in Wales, September 7, 1878, and educated in Auckland, New Zealand, Matthews headed for North America at the age of 20 to make his fortune, landing in San Francisco. Moving up the coast he made brief stays in Tacoma, Seattle and Victoria, before making Vancouver his permanent home.

Over the course of his working life he held a variety of positions, including a 20-year stint with Imperial Oil. He joined a local militia unit in 1903 and during the First World War was transferred to regular forces. He served in Europe from February 1916 to May 1918, eventually attaining the rank of 'Major,' a title he would use for the rest of his life. After the war Matthews operated his own scow and tug business for a time, eventually retiring in 1924.

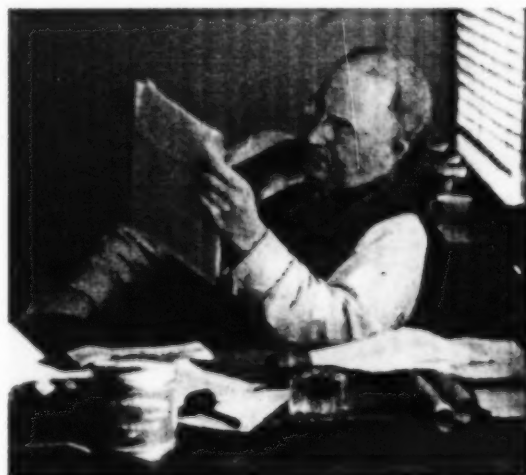
It was at this stage in the Major's life that his full attention was turned towards the collection and documentation of the City's history. After filling every nook and cranny of his home in Kitsilano, he began a prolonged campaign to find a permanent and more appropriate home for the voluminous and steadily growing collection of documents, photographs, and other memorabilia he had amassed.

He first attained space in 1931 in the attic of the old City Hall, a location that by all accounts was cold, dirty, and inadequate for the storage of irreplaceable historical documents. By enlisting the help and support of prominent local personalities, the Archives were moved several times: in 1933 to the temporary City Hall in the Holden Building on East Hastings, in 1936 to the new City Hall, and in 1959 to the Main Library.

During this period of frequent moves Matthews was also embroiled in a controversy with the Library Board over ownership of the materials, at one point even relocating the holdings back to his home in protest. But in June of 1933, Major Matthews was finally and unequivocally appointed as 'City Archivist,' a position he retained until his death at the age of 92, in 1970.

Today, many of Major Matthews' documentation projects are still some of the most heavily utilized resources in our holdings. For example, his *Early Vancouver* volumes, which consist of transcribed interviews conducted over a period of years with Vancouver's earliest pioneers, are accessed by researchers almost daily, as are his "topical and categorical files," which document a breadth and scope of local historical subject matter that is almost unimaginable.

Ever the outspoken advocate for a permanent, dedicated place for the Archives, Major Matthews did not live to see the completion of our current facilities, which were opened to coincide with the provincial centenary in 1972. Named in his honour, the Major Matthews Building was the first municipal archives repository in Canada to be built for the sole purpose of housing a city's archives, a fitting legacy for a man so dedicated to preserving for posterity the documentary heritage of our city.



Detail from *The Archivist at work*, B.W. Leeson photo,
City of Vancouver Archives Port P567

Friends of the Vancouver City Archives

Message from the Chair

Earlier this year the directors of the Friends of the Vancouver City Archives appointed me chairman. I agreed—but with some misgiving—knowing that it would be difficult to match the indefatigability and passion of our outgoing chairman, John Keenlyside.

Yet when all is said and done, it is the enthusiasm and dedication of each director, together with input from members-at-large of the Friends that enables us to be a major factor in bringing about specific improvements to the operations of the Archives.

During the remainder of the year I will try to make contact with every member to discuss whether, in addition to continuing to fund specific improvements in the Archives, we might search out archival material from families, businesses, or districts of Vancouver. By way of an example: after several years of hard work, the John Oliver High School Historical Society is about to publish a history of the school and the vast area of southeast Vancouver that it served. As is inevitably the case a great deal of the retrieved material, anecdotal information and photographs will not be included in the book. I have asked them to tender it to the Archives.

Please feel free to call me at any time - 604.970.2154; or
e-mail me at wallace-gilby-craig@shaw.ca.

Wallace Craig

Who We Are

The Friends of the Vancouver City Archives was founded in 1993 to promote public awareness of the City of Vancouver Archives and its services and projects. Through its fundraising activities and special events, it strives to support the use of the Archives' holdings by the general public and the professions. The Friends welcome new members and supporters. If you would like to help preserve Vancouver's documentary heritage, please join the Friends today.

Join the Friends of the Vancouver City Archives

You are invited to become a member of the Friends of the Vancouver City Archives. Annual membership fees are \$20.00 per individual or \$30.00 per family. Donations (over the regular membership fee) are also welcome. The Society has charitable status so is able to issue tax receipts. Benefits to members include occasional lectures, special events, the City of Vancouver Archives Newsletter, and "behind-the-scenes" tours. It is expected that there will be two or three meetings a year.

Membership forms are available by calling the City of Vancouver Archives at (604) 736-8561 or by visiting the Friends webpage on the Archives website: vancouver.ca/archives

Completed forms should be sent, along with payment, to:
Friends of the Vancouver City Archives
c/o City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street
Vancouver, BC V6J 3J9

Lectures and Special Events

On October 22nd, the Friends will host a special event, the annual fundraiser, called *Treasures of the Archives*. Members of the Friends have chosen their favourite Treasures from the Archives' collection, and will show off and discuss them throughout the afternoon. To find out what these Treasures are, and to view these Treasures together with an exquisite tea by the renowned Sheridee Lee, you need to purchase a ticket. For more information call the Archives at 604-736-8561.

Friends of the Vancouver City Archives Board of Directors 2006 - 2007

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